



康樂及文化事務署

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

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16 January 2019

Mr Anthony CHU
Clerk to the Panel on Public Service
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mr CHU,

**Legislative Council Panel on Public Service
Follow-up to meeting on 17 December 2018**

I refer to your letter dated 19 December 2018. With regard to the motion passed under agenda item III "Issues relating to the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department", our response is set out at Annex.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs Doris FOK)

for Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Encl.

Wording of the motion

“In view of the difficulties in recent years in recruiting seasonal lifeguards which entail a failure to alleviate the workload and pressure of current civil service lifeguards during peak seasons as well as lead to partial closure of some swimming pools and seriously undermine service quality, public safety as well as staff morale, this Panel requests the Government to improve the working conditions of lifeguards as soon as possible in order to attract new blood by, among others, increasing the number of civil service lifeguard posts, improving the remuneration packages of lifeguards, creating a Medical Director post, establishing a lifeguard training school, arranging pre-employment training and conducting a grade structure review.”

Response from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) currently provides lifeguard services at 44 public swimming pools, 38 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres. As at 1 August 2018, there were 1 959 lifeguards comprising 174 senior lifeguards and 1 785 lifeguards in LCSD. Of those 1 785 lifeguards, 687 non-civil service contract (NCSC) seasonal lifeguards were employed on a seasonal basis to augment the lifeguard manpower during the swimming season. With regard to the requests from the Panel on Public Service to increase the number of civil service lifeguard posts, improve the remuneration packages of lifeguards, create a Medical Director post, establish a lifeguard training school, arrange pre-employment training and conduct a grade structure review, LCSD’s response is as follows:

Increasing the number of civil service lifeguard posts

2. The safety of swimmers and players of water sports centres has all along been LCSD’s prime concern when considering the manpower requirements of lifeguards. LCSD has from time to time reviewed the lifeguard manpower arrangements for pools, beaches as well as water sports centres, taking into account the actual operational needs. Where justified, LCSD will propose the creation of additional civil service lifeguard posts in accordance with the established procedures. In fact, the total number of civil service lifeguards has steadily increased by 35% from 893 in 2011 to 1 209 in 2018. The actual numbers of civil service lifeguards for the years 2011 to 2018 are at the Appendix.

3. LCSD will review the manpower situation of the lifeguard grade thoroughly with regard to actual operational needs, and has strived to bid for additional resources to create more civil service lifeguard posts in accordance with the established procedure so as to increase the number and manpower ratio of civil service lifeguards posted to swimming pools or beaches. Furthermore,

LCSD will allocate extra resources to launch a pilot scheme in 2019, under which 40 non-civil service contract (NCSC) full-year full-time lifeguards will be recruited to form a regional-based “special support team” to respond to unforeseen manpower shortages at swimming pools and beaches and alleviate the work pressure faced by lifeguards on duty.

Improving the remuneration of lifeguards of LCSD

4. At present, civil service lifeguards are categorised under Qualification Group 6 (Technician, Supervisory and Related Grades) – Group II (Craft and Skill Plus Experience, or Apprenticeship Plus Experience). Lifeguards in the Artisan grade are remunerated at Master Pay Scale (MPS) points 5 to 8 (\$16,790 to \$20,270) whereas senior lifeguards in the Senior Artisan grade are remunerated at MPS points 8 to 10 (\$20,270 to \$22,865). Civil service lifeguards whose salaries have not reached the maximum pay points are entitled to an annual increment provided that their performance is satisfactory.

5. To maintain the attractiveness of the pay of seasonal lifeguards, LCSD adheres to the principle of keeping the pay of seasonal lifeguards broadly comparable with that of their private sector counterparts. To this end, starting from 2004, reference has been made to the local private employment market in terms of pay level of lifeguards and other important relevant factors, including LCSD’s fiscal position and the Composite Consumer Price Index, etc. in determining the annual pay adjustment for seasonal lifeguards.

6. LCSD has recently completed the pay review for seasonal lifeguards for the coming year and decided to increase their pay by 8% for the 2019 swimming season. The monthly salary of seasonal lifeguards for swimming pools/water sports centres for the 2019 swimming season has been adjusted upwards to \$17,345. Besides, in order to attract more qualified persons to work as seasonal lifeguards at beaches, seasonal lifeguards who work in Tsuen Wan District and Tuen Mun District will receive a monthly salary of \$18,045 while those who work in Sai Kung District, Southern District and Islands District will receive a monthly salary of \$18,345.

Grade Structure Review of Civil Service Lifeguards

7. The Government’s civil service pay policy is to offer sufficient remuneration to attract, retain and motivate staff of suitable calibre to provide the public with an effective and efficient service and maintain broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay. To implement this policy, the Government put in place the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism (Improved Mechanism) in 2007, under which regular pay surveys are conducted to ascertain whether civil service pay and private sector pay are broadly comparable. It is the Government’s policy that grade structure reviews will only be considered for individual non-directorate civilian civil service grades when the

following criteria are met:

- (a) the grades have proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties which cannot be resolved through the regular pay surveys under the Improved Mechanism; or
- (b) there are fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grades.

8. There are no proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties for civil service lifeguards. Recent recruitment experience has shown that the number of candidates usually far exceeded the number of vacancies and there was adequate supply of suitable candidates to fill the positions. Furthermore, the resignation rate of civil service lifeguards has also been lower than the overall resignation rate of the civil servants. Civil service lifeguards therefore do not meet the criterion as set out in paragraph 7(a) above.

9. As for the criterion set out in paragraph 7(b), civil service lifeguards, as all other civil servants, are required to keep their services for the public abreast of ever changing circumstances. The job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of all civil service grades evolve constantly, having regard to policy initiatives, changes in attitudes and expectations of the community, technological advancement, etc. While these developments may give rise to increase of workload for the civil servants, including lifeguards, it is considered that there have been no fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of civil service lifeguards. Civil service lifeguards therefore do not meet the second criterion for having a grade structure review.

10. Nonetheless, LCS D will continue keeping in view of the recruitment and attrition statistics of civil service lifeguards to monitor whether the grade has recruitment or retention difficulties which cannot be resolved by regular pay surveys.

Proposal on creation of a Medical Director post and establishment of a lifeguard training school

11. LCS D has always attached great importance on lifeguard training and has its own dedicated Training Section to provide suitable training to staff of various grades. LCS D allocates substantial resources to provide civil service lifeguards with a wide array of training opportunities every year and conducts reviews of the training arrangement in order to help improve their lifesaving skills and professionalism so as to meet the operational needs of the department. The Training Section plans and provides lifeguard training courses of different types, including specific vocational training for lifeguards (e.g. induction course, compulsory refresher courses on lifesaving and first aid skills and other skills upgrading programmes), and general training courses for staff of all

grades (including lifeguards) (e.g. courses on spoken English and customer service skills, occupational safety and health workshop, etc.). At present, vocational training courses provided for lifeguards by LCSD and the relevant accreditation are normally assessed and issued by authorised institutions, which are well recognised both locally and internationally.

12. LCSD has all along been working in co-operation with relevant professional departments and institutions, including the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, the Auxiliary Medical Service and the Hong Kong Life Saving Society, etc., in designing and providing lifeguard training. Their professional expertise, skills, equipment and recognised status, etc. are conducive to the provision of suitable training to the lifeguards. LCSD will build on the well-established and sound foundation to enhance collaboration and communication with the partners to ensure that the contents, design and standards of lifeguard training courses can keep abreast of time. The Training Section of LCSD has been effective in promoting and planning training for lifeguards with regard to actual operational needs. Advice will also be sought from the above professional departments/institutions if necessary to further enhance the training standard. LCSD will continue allocating additional resources to provide enhanced vocational training for lifeguards to improve their lifesaving skills and professionalism.

Arranging pre-employment training for lifeguards of LCSD

13. LCSD has reviewed the design and arrangements of the induction programme for lifeguards with a view to enabling newly recruited lifeguards to complete the induction training programme as soon as possible after joining the service. Starting from 2019, LCSD will arrange for newly appointed civil service lifeguards and NCSC lifeguards on long-term employment to complete part of the induction programme before assuming duties, which include, introductory practical training, general training and courses on advanced skills of skin diving rescue.

**Number of Civil Service Lifeguards in
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in 2011-2018**

Grade	Year*								2018 vs 2011	
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	No.	%
Senior Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool)	126	152	163	158	163	161	170	173	+47	+37.3%
Senior Artisan (Water Sports Centre)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	-2 [#]	-66.7%
Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool)	755	847	947	942	981	979	1 011	1 013	+258	+34.2%
Artisan (Water Sports Centre)	9	8	8	9	19	19	20	22	+13	+144.4%
Total	893	1 010	1 121	1 112	1 166	1 162	1 204	1 209	+316	+35.4%

Note

* As at 1 August of each year

A new round of recruitment exercise for Senior Artisan (Water Sports Centre) has been launched and offers of appointment are expected to be made in January 2019 to fill the vacancies.